

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 115898

FOL REPEAT OF BLANTYRE TO SECSTATE MAY 13

QTE:

C O N F I D E N T I A L BLANTYRE 0576

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AMEG

SUBJ: RESETTLEMENT OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES

REF: BLANTYRE 0537 ; STATE 97854

MET WITH PRES BANDA IN ZOMBA TODAY AT HIS REQUEST. HE FIRST BROUGHT UP MY TALK WITH MINISTER OF STATE MUWALO ON ABOVE SUBJ (REFTEL 537) AND SAID HE WANTED US TO KNOW THAT HE FEELS A SPECIAL REGARD AND ATTACHMENT TO TWO FOREIGN COUNTRIES, NAMELY GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES; THAT HE WOULD LIKE PRES FORD TO KNOW THAT MALAWI IS READY TO HELP WITH THE REFUGEE PROBLEM. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION AS TO HOW WE MIGHT MOVE AHEAD WITH REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN MALAWI, HE PROPOSED THAT AS A FIRST STEP THE USG SHOULD GIVE MALAWI SOME IDEA OF THE QUALIFICATIONS AND SKILLS OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES WHO WOULD CONSIDER SETTLEMENT IN MALAWI. HE OBSERVED THAT THERE IS A NEED FOR CONSTRUCTION ENGINEERS, BOTH IN ROAD CONSTRUCTION AND GENERAL BUILDING, DOCTORS, SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS, AGRICULTURAL TECHNICIANS, ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS, ETC. HE REMARKED IN A FAVORABLE TONE THAT
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RECENTLY A SOUTH KOREAN ROAD CONSTRUCTION FIRM HAS WON A BID

FOR A JOB HERE AND SAID SOUTH VIETNAMESE REFUGEES WOULD BE MOST WELCOME IN MALAWI WITH THE UNDERSTANDING, OF COURSE, THAT THEY WOULD CAUSE NO TROUBLE OR DISRUPTION.

I TOLD PRES BANDA THAT I WOULD TRY TO ASCERTAIN MORE PRECISE DETAILS WITH REGARD TO SOUTH VIETNAMESE WHO MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN COMING TO MALAWI AND WE AGREED THAT AT SUCH TIME I WOULD REPORT BACK TO HIM.

COMMENT: I BELIEVE BANDA WAS WHOLLY SINCERE IN HIS OFFER AND THAT MALAWI WOULD TAKE A MODEST NUMBER OF REFUGEES AND GIVE THEM REASONABLY GOOD JOBS PROVIDED WE CAN MESH PEOPLE AVAILABLE WITH MALAWI'S NEEDS. I THINK THE GOM WOULD OFFER THEM SALARIES AND HOUSING AT LEAST EQUIVALENT TO THAT PROVIDED FOR MALAWIANS IN THE SAME CATEGORIES AND PERHAPS SOMEWHAT BETTER. THE CLIMATE HERE IS HEALTHY, THE COST OF LIVING RELATIVELY LOW AND MALAWIANS IN THE ABOVE CATEGORIES SEEM NORMALLY ABLE TO AFFORD A MODEST HOUSE WITH MODERN CONVENIENCES AND A SMALL CAR.

BY "CAUSE NO TROUBLE" BANDA MEANS STAYING OUT OF LOCAL POLITICS OR ENGAGING IN CRITICISM OF THE PRES OR HIS ADMINISTRATION. ABIDING BY THIS CAVEAT, I THINK VIETNAMESE REFUGEES WOULD BE ABLE TO LIVE HERE QUITE COMFORTABLY. BANDA DID NOT MENTION WHETHER SUCH RESETTLEMENT WOULD BE PERMANENT OR TEMPORARY AND I WOULD GUESS THIS QUESTION IS STILL OPEN AND MIGHT BETTER BE ADDRESSED WHEN WE SEE IF WE HAVE SOMETHING TO PROPOSE.

THE PRESIDENT'S MANNER WAS EXTREMELY CORDIAL THROUGHOUT OUR CONVERSATION AND HE LOOKED VERY RELAXED AND REFRESHED IN CONTRAST TO HIS APPEARANCE ON HIS ARRIVAL BACK FROM LONDON LAST SATURDAY. STEENSON UNQTE KISSINGER

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